

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION POLICY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL
RELATIONS AND THE CENSUS
CONGRESSMAN ADAM PUTNAM, CHAIRMAN



OVERSIGHT HEARING
STATEMENT BY ADAM PUTNAM, CHAIRMAN

Hearing topic: “*Can Factual Data Analysis Strengthen National Security?*”
-Part Two”

Tuesday, May 20, 2003
10:00 a.m.
Room 2154 Rayburn House Office Building

OPENING STATEMENT

With today’s continued improvements in technology, particularly in the areas of database exploration and information sharing, Federal agencies faced with the monumental task of enhancing national security and law enforcement, are provided a number of opportunities to do so more effectively. Specifically, the process of factual data analysis enables the end user to sort through massive amounts of information, identifying patterns of interest to its user, in a matter of seconds. This kind of tool has proven to be beneficial in a variety of applications, and could have considerable implications for law enforcement and Federal authorities tasked with identifying terrorist activity before it strikes.

At the same time, there are valid questions and concerns about the government’s potential access to the personal information of individual citizens that could be the subject of a “data mining” process. While it is important that the Federal government utilize all available resources to enhance national security, it is critical that we continue to safeguard American values of personal freedom and privacy. Today’s hearing will focus on examining the questions and concerns surrounding the federal government’s use of factual data analysis, or information produced by this analytical process.

With the wealth of technology available today, and certainly as a result of the events of September 11, 2001, the American people have a realistic expectation that government and law enforcement entities must continue their efforts to become better equipped to perform their duties. Many Federal agencies do not even have the technological tools that the private sector currently possesses. In many cases, this means that agencies are undergoing a complete technology upgrade as well as introducing advanced information technology applications. Advanced technology will enable government to better share and analyze important information.

By making use of these tools, government and law enforcement hope to be more successful at securing and protecting our nation.

As government and law enforcement begin to implement new strategies using advanced technologies such as data mining, there are a number of questions and concerns that need to be addressed. These agencies will need to address how existing privacy laws would apply to their programs; what data sources do they intend to draw from; how the reliability of the data will be insured; what procedures would be in place to secure the data collected from intrusion; and what recourse would be available to an individual who believes that his or her information is inaccurate or incomplete.

We have held previous hearings on this very subject. On May 6th, the Subcommittee heard from representatives from the Total Information Awareness program, which is run by Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Transportation Security Administration's CAPPS II program, which is a passenger prescreening process, and the FBI's Trilogy and related data warehousing and data mining programs. What we learned from each of these witnesses is that they are in the very infancy stages of developing their strategies involving this analytical process. They have testified that as they continue to figure out what role factual data analysis will play, each acknowledge and affirm their commitment to protection of privacy and personal freedom as fundamental elements of their program.

Today we will hear from an expert panel of witnesses who will address the matter of privacy, confidentiality and personal freedom, in the context of the protection of civil liberties in the pursuit of homeland security and strengthened law enforcement. The members of the Subcommittee look forward to hearing the observations and recommendations from this panel and to continue to examine these matters to determine in fact, whether "factual data analysis" can strengthen national security.

The use of advanced information technologies does not mean the erosion of personal liberties is inevitable. The federal government's objective of better information sharing and analysis can...and must... be met simultaneously with the securing of personal liberties. The Subcommittee looks forward to working with these agencies and the variety of stakeholders in this matter, as they continue to plan and implement their proposals for enhancing homeland security using advanced information technology.